

Interview with Timuel Black  
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Excerpt of Interview # 2: September 9, 2009  
Interviewer: Mark DePue

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Black: When we were preparing to go to Japan after all this and we were in Marseilles, we dropped the atomic bomb. My first reaction: I would have preferred going on to Japan. It shocked me. I'd been in places, and saw twenty-ton bombs dropped. I couldn't imagine a weapon the size of a golf ball killing a hundred thousand people.

DePue: But why did you want, at that moment in time, to go to Japan?

Black: I wanted to go before.

DePue: OK, but why?

Black: At that point, I would have preferred. My imagination told me, "If we can do that, then they can do it, too." It was not long after that when Einstein said, "If man can't destroy the bomb, the bomb will destroy man." He had been the one to split the atom; he had been engineering to split the atom. What I've learned from people who knew him, his advice to America was to drop it on Berlin, but we dropped it on Hiroshima, and then two days later, Nagasaki.

DePue: Well, that was in large part a matter of timing as much as anything. It wasn't ready when the war in Germany was wrapping up. I want to go back and—

Black: We're going back into this race thing.

DePue: Well, I ask you again why you were wanting to go to Japan before the bomb was dropped.

Black: No, when it happened. Oh, before? I was just on assignment, and I was expressing to my fellow soldiers when the bomb was dropped that I'd rather take my chances than have the Americans do this.

DePue: Oh, okay.

Black: No, I was just going to Japan... I didn't want to go! (laughter) No, I didn't want to go. We were going to go through the canal, then through the Suez, and then on down to... But no, that was my assignment. I was going to go because I had to.

DePue: So, what you're saying is, you would have preferred to have you personally go to Japan rather than drop the bomb?

Black: I would rather us, the army, battle it out on the ground or in another way than to have a weapon, a hundred thousand die. You know, the fact that a hundred thousand people are alive and then seconds later they're dead, and some of them fall so fast they couldn't even... Their shadows are on the walls most places.